Early Islamic Sufism and *Sharī’ah* Sciences: Status and Inter-relationships

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Abstract:
The early Islamic Sufism has long been subject to fierce criticism. Some argue that it is completely non-Islamic, philosophical fantasy, powerlessness, total isolation or escaping from the real life and the struggle therein. Besides, some other researchers separate Sufism from other disciplines of Shari’ah knowledge, namely Fiqh, Ḥadīth and Qur’ānic Exegesis, arguing that Sufism and Sufis were both rejected and degraded by scholars of these Shari’ah disciplines. In tracking the historical sources, books of biographies and classes, this paper investigates these assumptions and discusses the position and the status of the early Islamic Sufism (from 1st to the 5th century of Hijrah) compared to other disciplines of Shari’ah knowledge. It also provides examples of the Sufi scholars’ contributions in these disciplines of Shari’ah knowledge. Moreover, it investigates the inter-relationships between the Sufi masters and the scholars of Fiqh, Ḥadīth and Qur’ānic Exegesis.

Keywords: Sufism, Fiqh, Ḥadīth, Qur’ān, Shari’ah

التضامن الإسلامي: موقعه من علوم الشريعة وصلة رجاله بقبة العلماء
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الملخص:
تعددت الكتابات والدراسات التي تناولت التضامن الإسلامي، إلا أن هذه الكتابات والدراسات جعلت من أصل التضامن وتطوره وأثره في الإسلام محورًا هامًا ورئيسًا لها. وعلى الرغم من أهمية هذه الجوانب في ميدان البحث العلمي، إلا أن مسألة أثر الحركة الصوفية في الميدان العلمي، وارتباط رجال هذا العلم بغيرهم من علماء الأمة، لم يحظ بكثير من الاهتمام من قبل الباحثين؛ بل إن بعض الدراسات، عن تعمد أو غيره، قللت من الأثر الفكري والسلوكية للتضامن الإسلامي إلى تلك الدرجة التي كونت حائزاً بين ذلك التراث العظيم واستفادة الإنسان منه. وهذا البحث هو محاولة لفهم موقع التضامن الإسلامي من علوم الشريعة مبرزاً اهتمام الصوفية بالعلم الشرعي في علم الفقه بالتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم والتأليف فيها إلى أن حُسب كثير منهم على أهل هذه العلوم وأدرج بعضًا منهم في طبقات الفقهاء والمحدثين والمفسرين. ويبيّن الفصل كذلك مدى ارتباط رجال التضامن الإسلامي بشيوخ علومهم في علوم الفقه والحديث والتفسير، وحرصهم على التمسك بأحكامها وأدابها. كما يلقي الفصل الضوء أيضًا على ارتباط أكثر من الصوفية في تدريس تلك العلوم و
The Arabic word *Taşawwuf* literally means “to become a Sufi,” and it is generally translated as Sufism.¹ The etymologies for the term are various and researchers have greatly differed concerning the source word of this term and the etymological derivations to which the “Sufi” is attributed. Some researchers connect the term *Ṣafā* (Purity), a moral trait and quality which Sufis are always contending with themselves to attain.² Others refer the term *Taşawwuf* to the root word *Ṣaff* (line), emphasizing the excellence of Sufis in devotion and piety.³ A third opinion, however, links the term to *Ṣuffah*, i.e. the long, covered portico or vestibule which formed part of the Mosque of the Prophet (ﷺ) at Medina and which the Prophet built for the poor people who later on came to be identified as *ahl al-Ṣuffah* (People of the Bench).⁴ For Sufis, those people are typifying the ideal of asceticism and piety.⁵

With these suggestions, which all denote attributes and qualities assumingly culminated in the character of the Sufis, into consideration, the opinion that connects the term *Taşawwuf* to the etymological derivation *Ṣūf* (wool or the woolen cloth) has found a wide acceptance among researchers of Sufism, past and present.⁶ It is noted that this opinion is more accurate from a morphological point of view. Besides it is supported given the history of Sufis and their well-known practice of wearing the woolen cloths in the early times of evolution.⁷

Having discussed all the aforementioned suggestions, al-Qushayrī (d. 465 A.H.) – who authored “*Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*” which is held by Sufis as the most authoritative source in Sufism – took a unique direction when he noted that the term *Taşawwuf* has no root word neither linguistically nor etymologically. He

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concluded that *Taṣawwuf* is rather a name which has been originated to describe this specific category of people.\(^8\)

As far as the technical meaning of the term *Taṣawwuf* is concerned, scores of definitions are also offered. Sufism, al-Sarrāj, al-Suhrawardī and others argue, has been defined with more than a hundred definitions.\(^9\) In his book “ʻ*Awārif al-Maʻārif*”, al-Suhrawardī even concluded that the Sufi masters’ statements defining Sufism exceed a thousand.\(^10\)

With such multiplicity of definitions, many researchers concluded it is not as easy task to reach a comprehensive technical definition which would give a general overview of Sufism.\(^11\) Al-Qushayrī included in his “*Risālah*” (Epistle) many of the early Sufis’ definitions of Sufism.\(^12\) Reviewing the definitions he quoted and the other definitions quoted by other Sufi researchers are not within the scope of this paper. Yet, there is a need to spot light on a definition with a much wider scope for Sufism, and the the definition of Ibn ʻAjibah (d. 1224 A.H) is suggested here; it tells “Sufism is the knowledge through which one can know how travelling (*sulūk*) [in Allah’s path] is commenced, how the inwards are cleansed [from the whims and evils] and how they are then adorned with the various kinds of good moral traits. Its beginning stage is knowledge, its middle stage is practice and its final stage is the bestowed miracle”.\(^13\)

With this definition of Ibn ʻAjibah in mind, some of the collective efforts that have been exerted by the Sufi scholars and masters in thought, knowledge and practice will be discussed in this paper.

**The Sufis’ Encouragement to master the Disciplines of *Sharī‘ah* Knowledge**

Evidently, Sufis were very much keen to learn the other sciences of *Sharī‘ah*. They confirmed that learning these sciences before setting out on the spiritual path of Sufism forms a protective shield for the Sufi novices and pupils against misconceptions and pernicious innovations. Therefore, many Sufi scholars made it

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a condition for the Sufi novice (mūrīd)\textsuperscript{14} to learn Sharī’ah sciences such as Fiqh, Tafsīr and Ḥadīth first. Sufis also consider that adherence to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and abidance by the rulings of Sharī’ah are prerequisites for commencing their Path and a threshold to polishing the heart and purifying the soul.

This is made crystal clear by Al-Junayd, who says: “In this affair [of ours] one must not follow anyone who has not learned by heart the Qur’ān and written down the reports of the Prophet, because our knowledge is bound by the [Holy] Book and by the [Prophet’s] custom.”\textsuperscript{15} In his twenties, al-Junayd – who is known as the master of the community of Sufis – used to study the Sharī’ah sciences under the renowned scholars of his time. Al-Qushayrī emphasized that he mastered the principal sciences of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and that he was a well established jurist in the fiqh school of Abū Thawr.\textsuperscript{16}

Moreover, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in his book “Qūṭ al-Qulūb” reported that al-Junayd used to hear his maternal uncle al-Sarrī al-Saqāf praying for him every time he left his assembly: “May Allah make you a qualified person in Ḥadīth (Muhaddith) who, afterwards, becomes a Sufi and may He not make you a Sufi who, afterwards, becomes a qualified person in Ḥadīth.”\textsuperscript{17} Commenting on al-Sarrī’s saying, al-Makkī explained:

He means that if you start with (learning) the science of Ḥadīth and Reports (Āthār), and, then, you commence the spiritual way of renunciation and devotion, you will excel in Sufism and attain the status of the [Divine] Gnostics (al-‘Ārifīn). But, if you start with devotion and Sufism, you will be entirely preoccupied with that and as a result you will neglect [the learning of] the Sunnah and consequently [you will get used to] uttering paradoxical or blasphemous sayings (shath)\textsuperscript{18} or committing mistakes.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Murīd (pl. Murīdūn) literally means “seeker” or “aspirant”, followers of a Sufi master. The word is derived from “desire” (irādah), as mūrīd is the one who desires. According to the usage of Sufis, the murīd is someone who has no desire; he who has not stripped himself from desire, cannot be counted among murīdīn; See Al-Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, pp. 213-214.

\textsuperscript{15} Al-Qushayrī, Al-Qushayrī’s Epistle on Sufism, Trans. Alexander D. Knysh, p. 44.


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{18} The original meaning of shath (pl. Shatahāt) in Arabic is “overflow of a pot.” In Sufi terminology, Shatahāt are “seemingly blasphemous words and expressions uttered by Sufis who often in the state of ecstasy.”

\textsuperscript{19} Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Qūṭ al-Qulūb, Vol. 1, p. 437.
According to al-Sarrī al-Saqāṭī and Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī, it is better not to tread on the Sufi Path without having studied the sciences of Sharī‘ah as this is the foundation upon which worship and devotion are built.

The Status of Sufism Compared to other Disciplines of Sharī‘ah Knowledge

In the course of Islamic history, different Sharī‘ah sciences have come under severe attacks. Attempts to distort Fiqh, Tafseer and Ḥadīth and their respective specialized scholars were relentlessly made, and Islamic Sufism was not an exception. Some have tried to isolate and separate Sufism and Sufi scholars from other branches of Islamic knowledge and competent scholars, arguing that Sufism was something alien to and unaccepted by the scholars of Sharī‘ah. Therefore, the need arises for investigating the position and status of Islamic Sufism compared to Sharī‘ah fields of inquiry, namely Fiqh, Tafseer and Ḥadīth and the inter-relationships between the Sufi scholars and the scholars of those Sharī‘ah disciplines.

The relationship of Sufism to other Islamic sciences has long been the subject of many discussions. Since Sufism is considered by some as the science that is mainly concerned with correcting the intentions and adhering to sincerity (ikhlāṣ) in all deeds, some scholars, like Aḥmad ibn ‘Ajībah in his introduction to the book al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā ‘īyah, hold the opinion that it is a condition for the perfectness and acceptance of all other sciences. Ibn ‘Ajībah also quoted al-Siyūṭī as saying: “Sufism to other Islamic sciences is as important as the science of eloquence (‘ilm al-bayān) to Arabic Grammar,” meaning that it perfects and improves it.

Moreover, Zarrūq is reported to have been exemplifying the relationship of Sufism to Islamic faith as the relationship of the soul to the body. Although these opinions suggest the importance of Sufism to other Islamic sciences theoretically, the need arises to probe the inter-relationship developed between Sufism and these sciences and the link that connects scholars of both sides. For the purpose of investigating this, the following part explores the inter-relationships between Sufism and Sufis on one hand, and Fiqh, Tafsīr, and Ḥadīth and their competent scholars on the other hand.

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21 Ḥilmī fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, undated), pp. 22-23.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid
Sufism and Fiqh

The word “Fiqh” was originally used as a comprehensive term referring to a number of sciences, such as jurisprudence, doctrines of theology, morality, ethics etc. This is concluded by Siddiq Hasan Khan in his encyclopedic book Abjad al-ʿUlūm. Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān also quoted Abū Ḥanīfah as saying: “Fiqh is the science that was originally concerned with the soul and spirituality”. Al-Ghazālī also suggested that the term Fiqh was originally put to denote the knowledge of the Hereafter and the principles of diagnosing the subtle faults of one’s self (ʾāfāt al-nafs); and in the course of time, the originally intended meaning of the term has been expanded to become connotative of the knowledge of issuing Fatwas (non-binding legal rulings).

Although both disciplines became distinctive from each other, they are considered interrelated and complementary to each other. Some Sufi scholars even argue that Sufism complements the study of Fiqh as it helps Muslims to fulfill Allah’s Commands in a way that allows them to taste the sweetness of belief and that would lead them to a stronger commitment to following Allah’s commands. This explains Zarrūq’s statement: “Jurisprudence and Sufism are partners in guiding people to Allah, His Rulings and His Commands.”

Zarrūq’s previous statement can be understood in the context that both Fiqh and Sufism deal in most cases with the same rulings, yet the former deals with the principles and conditions of perfecting the deeds, while the later, however, details the principles and conditions which lead to the acceptance of these deeds and therefore attaining the pleasure of Allah and drawing nearer to Him.

For example, books of Fiqh usually begin with a chapter entitled “purification” (al-ṭahārah), but rarely do they dwell upon its inner aspects and spiritual dimensions the same way Sufism tackles it. By the same token, the books of Fiqh expounds on the rulings related to performing prayer: its prerequisites, pillars, required actions, recommended actions, disliked actions, actions that invalidate it, etc.; but they usually do not discuss internal states that should be adhered to during observing prayers and they also lack discussions on how one can attain humility before Allah (khushūʿ) in prayer, and what actions lead to its realization. As such, Sufism and Fiqh complement each other.

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25 Ibid.
26 *Qwāʿid al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 16.
Practically speaking, many Sufis learned *Fiqh* and became well established in its rulings and principles. Many of them were even reported to have studied under the renowned scholars of four famous schools of *Fiqh* and have attained advanced levels in their learning circles. As a way to examine and explore the involvement of Sufis in the circles of *Fiqh* and the inter-relationships between Jurists and Sufis, this paper presents the following examples, highlighting, first and foremost, the relationships which the early Sufis developed with the founders of the four famous schools of *Fiqh*; and the opinions of the four *Imāms* of the famous *Fiqhi madh-habs* concerning Sufism and the Sufis.

It is a noteworthy to find that the major Sufi biographical works, such as “*Ḥīyat al-Awliyā’*”, “*al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah*”, “*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*”, “*Kashf al-Mahjūb*” and many others include entries for the four founding *Imāms* of the famous *Fiqhi* schools, thus counting them among the early masters of Sufism given their embodiment of the principles of the sound and authentic Sufism that is basically defined as *khuluq* (good moral traits). In addition, the early Sufi encyclopedic works, like “*Qūṭ al-Qulūb*”, “*Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*”, and “*al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*” are ample with reports and anecdotes about their moral traits. These Sufi sources also included their statements, virtues and actions.

**First: *Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 A.H/767 A.D):*** He was known for his asceticism and piety. Most of his students were proven to be symbols and masters of Sufism. The most prominent among them were ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Dāwūd al-Ṭā’ī, al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iāḍ and Shaqīq al-Balkhī. It is reported that the Sufis’ peculiar way of worship, devotion and asceticism really appealed to Abū Ḥanīfah and that he used to advise those who tread on this path to seek *Sharī‘ah* knowledge first before they commence their spiritual journey.

One time, he reportedly met Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham and said to him: “O’ Ibrāhīm, you have been bestowed a good manner in devotion and dedication to worship, yet I advise you to pay attention to seeking knowledge as it is the principal of worship and the support of things.”  

Moreover, Sufi masters and scholars boast that their link of transmission (*sanad*) in Sufism goes all the way back to him. Ibn ‘Ābidīn stated in his book “*al-Durr al-Mukhtār*” reported a chain of transmission proving that the Sufi master Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq received the knowledge of the spiritual path from Abū al-Qāsim al-Naṣrābāḏī, who received it from al-Shiblī, who received it from al-Sarrī al-Saqaṭī who received it from Ma’rūf al-Karkhī, who received it from Dāwūd al-

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Ta’ī, who took from Abū Ḥanīfah. Based on this, it is clear that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was so close to the circles of Sufism and that the early Sufi masters used to frequent him for receiving knowledge in both Fiqh and Sufism.

**Second: Imām Mālik (d. 179 A.H/795 A.D):** The renowned Sufi shaykh ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak was one of Imām Mālik’s studious disciples and he related some of Mālik’s spiritual states (ahwāl). Moreover, there is a well-known statement attributed to Imām Mālik in which he refers to the correlation between Sufism and Fiqh: “He who follows the path of Sufism while neglecting jurisprudence is a heretic; and he who learns jurisprudence while neglecting the Path commits transgression. But he who combines both has attained the Truth.”

**Third: Imām al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204 A.H/819 A.D):** Al-Shāfi‘ī confirmed the Sufis’ steadfastness in devotion. It is reported that al-Shāfi‘ī accompanied some of the Sufis of his time and benefited from them. In his book “Madārij al-Sāliḥīn”, Ibn al-Qayyīm (d. 571 A.H.) quoted al-Shāfi‘ī’s famous statement: “I accompanied the Sufis and received from them but two statements: ‘Time is as a sword. If you do not cut it, it cuts you’; and ‘if you do not keep yourself busy with truth, it will keep you busy with falsehood’.”

Al-Shāfi‘ī has also been quoted as saying: “Three things in this world have been made beloved to me: avoiding affectation, treating people kindly, and following the ways of the people of Taṣawwuf”.

**Fourth: Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḫanbal (d. 241 A.H/855 A.D):** Imām Aḥmad was known for his vast knowledge of the mystical facts and realities, and he used to discuss the subtle matters of Sufism with Sufis. It is even argued that his fame in asceticism (zuhd) is as great as his fame in the sciences of Ḥadīth and Fiqh. He had been reported as saying about Sufis: “I do not know people on earth better than them.”

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29 This statement of Imām Mālik is found in many sources, including: Zarrūq, Qwā‘īd al-Taṣawwuf, p. 7; Mullah ‘Ālī al-Qūrī, Sharh ‘Ayn al-Ilm wa-Zayn al-Ḥīm (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Diniyyah, undated), Vol. 1, p. 33.
33 Ibid.
Moreover, *Imām Aḥmad* wrote a book entitled “al-Zuhd” (asceticism) in which he included the statements of the Prophet’s companions and their followers and the masters of Sufism, like Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham, Mālik ibn Dīnār, al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ and many others. Some scholars consider this book as the earliest authenticated source on Sufism in its early stages.\(^{34}\)

In addition, *Imām Aḥmad* was a contemporary of a group of Sufi scholars and masters, and his relationship with them was evidently based on mutual respect, appreciation and veneration. He lived at the time of the Sufi master Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 227 A.H.). When he was asked about him, Aḥmad said: “He is the fourth of the seven substitutes\(^{35}\) (*abdāl)*”.\(^{36}\) Moreover, when Bishr died, Aḥmad said: “He, may Allah be pleased with him, died and there is nobody equal to him in this nation (*ummah*) but ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abd Qays, for both of them died and left nothing behind them, and he continued, ‘Had he (Bishr) got married, he would have been achieved a loftier status.’”\(^{37}\)

Another case in point indicating the good relationship between *Imām Ahmad* and the Sufi masters is when ‘Abdullāh, the son of *Imām Aḥmad*, asked his father about the Sufi master Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200 A.H.): “Did Maʿrūf have something of knowledge?” To which *Imām Aḥmad* replied: “He had the head of knowledge, and it is the fear of Allah’s wrath (*khāshyat Allah*)”.\(^{38}\) It is even said that Maʿrūf al-Karkhī was one of Aḥmad’s masters (*shuyūkh*) in *sulāk* (spiritual journey of Sufism) as Aḥmad used to frequent him and ask him\(^{39}\) on matters related to *sulāk*, and this could explain why Maʿrūf al-Karkhī has entry in Ibn Abī Yaʿlā’s biographical work of the Ḥanbalis, as he considered him one of Aḥmad’s masters or *shuyūkh*.\(^{40}\)

It is even related that *Imām Aḥmad* frequently met with many Sufi masters like al-Sarrī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253 A.H.) and Abū Ḥamzah al-Ṣūfī (d. 269 A.H.) as *Imām Aḥmad* used to refer to the latter concerning the juristic issues and he would say to

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\(^{34}\) Hasan al-Shāfiʿī, *Fuṣūl fī al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 133.
him: “What would you say concerning such and such matter O’ Sufi?” Moreover, al-Zirikly, in his biographical work “Al-A’lām”, argued that Imām Aḥmad met with Abū Turāb al-Nakshabānī (d. 245 A.H.), Dhū al-Nūn al-Misrī (d. 246 A.H.) and Abū Ja’far al-Ṭūsī (d. 254 A.H.) and benefited from them.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, it becomes clear that mutual respect and veneration were the normal case with regard to the relationship between the Sufi masters and the founders of both sides, i.e. the Sufis and the Jurists, a careful investigation is needed for examining if this has also been the case with the scholars of later generations and classes. This paper made a careful review of the biographical books of Jurists to investigate the inter-relationships between both sides and found that the books of the Jurists’ classes and biographies are replete with the Sufis who were proven to excel in the study of Jurisprudence. The following is a quick review of some cases:

a. The Ḥanafi Sufis:
   - Al-Balkhī (Shaqqī ibn Ibrāhīm Abū ‘Alī) (d. 194 A.H/810 A.D): He was a Sufi master of Khurasan and one of the Sufis whom al-Qushayrī included in his Epistle on Sufism. He was well known for his much elucidation on the mystical station of Trust in God (tawakkul). He was also one of the teachers of the Sufi master Ḥātim al-Asamm (d. 237 A.H/851 A.D). Besides, he was one of the masters of Ḥanafi school of Fiqh, and he accompanied the famous jurist Ya‘qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, better known as Abū Yusuf (d. 182 A.H/798 A.D), who was a direct student of Abū Ḥanīfah and who served as the Chief Judge (qādī al-quḍāh) during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Shaqqī learned under Abū Yusuf and read some books on the Ḥanafi Fiqh to him.

43 “He is one of the men of al-Qushayrī’s Risālah” (min Riğāl al-Risālah) is a phrase researches of Sufism usually use to denote the authenticity and authority of the person quoted. Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyyah has long been accorded a high esteem among the researchers of Sufism, some even called it “the constitution of Sufism” as a way to convey that the status it commands to Sufism is just like the status al-Shāfi‘ī’s al-Risālah commands to the science of Principles of Fiqh. From this, the Sufi masters mentioned in al-Risālah derives their authority and authenticity.
Early Islamic Sufism and *Sharī'ah* Sciences: Status and Inter-relationships

Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Muḥammad

- **Al-Sulamī (Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī) (d. 409 A.H/1018 A.D):** He was a well known Sufi and ascetic who authored the famous biographical book “*Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣāfiyyah*”. He is counted as one of the Ḥanafī scholars and his biography is founded in the biographical books of Ḥanafī Jurists.\(^{45}\)

  b. The Ṭalikī Sufis

- **Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (Abū al-Fayḍ Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī) (d. 245 A.H/1053 A.D):** On the one hand, he was one of the Sufi masters whom Al-Qushayrī included in his *al-Risālah*; and on the other hand, he was a Ṭalikī Jurist and one of the famous narrators of the renowned book “*Mwaṭṭa’ al-Imam Ṭalik*”. His teacher and master in Sufism was Shaqran al-Qayrawānī, in addition, Sahl ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Tustarrī was one of his disciples and students.\(^ {46}\)

- **Abū Ṭalīb al-Makkī (Abū Muḥammad Makkī ibn Abī Ṭalīb) (d. 386 A.H/996 A.D):** He was a Mālikī scholar, Ḥāfidh (i.e. one of the grades of the scholars of Ḥadīth) and Muqrī’ (the one who teaches people to recite Qur’ān). He authored the voluminous book of Sufism “*Qūṭ al-Qulūb*”.\(^ {47}\)

  c. The Shāfi’ī Sufis

- **Al-Muḥāsibī (Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Baghdādī) (d. 243 A.H/857 A.D):** He is one of the Sufi Masters whose biographies are included in al-Qushayrī’s Epistle. He has many books in asceticism and Sufism. He is one of the early disciples and students of Imām al-Shāfi’ī and one of the renowned Shāfi’ī Jurists.\(^ {48}\)

- **Al-Qushayrī (Abu al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Naysābūrī) (d. 465 A.H/1072 A.D):** He was a renowned Shāfi’ī Jurist and a Sufi master. He


compiled his famous book “al-Risālah al-Qushayrīah” which is held among the researchers of Sufism as the “constitution of Sufism”.49

- Al-Ghazālī (Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭūsī) (d. 505 A.H/1111 A.D): He was described as the Second great Shāfi‘ī scholar right after Imām al-Shāfi‘ī. He fame in both sciences, namely, Fiqh and Sufism were so considerable. Moreover he authored and compiled voluminous books in both sciences.50

   d. The Ḥanbalī Sufis

- Abū Ḥamzah al-Ṣūfī (d. 289 A.H/1095 A.D): He was one of the disciples and companions of Imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal and he used to accompany him and attend his classes. Imām Aḥmad is reported to had frequently asked him about Fiqh issues saying: “what is your opinion in such and such O’ Šūfī”. He was one of the Sufi masters whose biography was included by Imām al-Qushayrī. He was also well-learned and deeply established in the science of Qirā’t (the variant modes of recitations of the Qur’ān).51

- Abū Ismā‘īl ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far ibn Maṃsūr al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481 A.H/1088 A.D): He authored the famous book “Manāzil al-Sā‘īrīn” which is considered one of the early and authoritative books in Sufism. He was also a Ḥanbalī scholar.52

   The examples mentioned above are selective and connotative. This paper is not indented to, and practically cannot, be inclusive and comprehensive. It nevertheless aims at indicating that Sufism has never been away from or alien to Fiqh nor Fiqh was opposing to Sufism. Both sides used to show respect and to attend to one another, and in this way, the sciences of Islam were emerged interdependent, correlated and harmonized. These were some glimpses and examples that would provoke thinking and drive other researchers to delve deep into this topic.


Sufism and Ḥadīth

Sufis gave a special and tremendous care to the science of Ḥadīth. Their keen advice to their disciples to learn Ḥadīth and involve themselves in recording and preserving the Prophetic traditions was evident many sources. Besides, many pieces of advice found in the books of Sufism prove that Sufis held the science of Ḥadīth and its scholars in a high esteem.

A quick look into the books of classes and biographies of both Ḥadīth and Sufi scholars clearly demonstrate how Sufis were very much engaged in this field, and would also gauge the degree of respect and appreciation that scholars of both sides used to show to one another.

It should be emphasized that not only the Sufis were keen to learn the science of Ḥadīth, scholars of Ḥadīth were also very much encouraged to adhere to Sufism and engage themselves in the Sufis’ spiritual exercises that lead to purity and attainment of sublime moral traits. This is quite clear from al-Dhahabī’s statement in which he concluded that the qualified scholar must feature both sciences, i.e. Ḥadīth and Sufism, for when a scholar of Ḥadīth lacks Sufism, on the one hand, his dedication to Allah may not be complete, and when the Sufi, on the other hand, is ignorant of the science of Ḥadīth, he might fall into errors and deviate from what is right.  

Many famous Ḥadīth scholars narrated ḥadiths from Sufis. Furthermore, statements of praise and appreciation were reciprocally released from the scholars of both sciences. On the one side, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405 A.H/1014 A.D) narrated some ḥadiths in his book “al-Mustadrak” from the Sufi master Ja’far ibn Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Khaladī (d. 348 A.H/959 A.D) and he used to describe him as “the master of Sufism of his time” (Shaykh al-Taṣawwuf fī ‘Aṣrīhi). Moreover, Al-Ḥākim argued that Sufis following the footsteps of Ahl al-Suffah and actualize their conditions in every time given their way in asceticism and dedication to Allah and His Messenger (шех).

On the other side, the famous scholar of Ḥadīth and Ḥāfīz Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣfḥānī (d. 430 A.H/1038 A.D) who enjoys a considerable fame as a scholar of Ḥadīth, was a Sufi. He wrote the voluminous book “Hilyat al-Awliyā’” in which he collected the biographies of the Sufī masters, men and women, with a special focus on the manifestations of Sufism in the personality of every scholar he mentions.

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55 Ibid.
After each biography, he used to mention a definition of Sufism that fits most to the spiritual and mystical status of the person in question.\(^{56}\)

Another example that demonstrates the engagement of scholars of Ḥadīth in Sufism is the book written by the Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Iṣḥābī al-Mālikī (d. 453 A.H/1148 A.D) entitled “Sīrat al-Murídīn” which Zarrūq argued to be a book on Sufism.\(^{57}\) Moreover, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320 A.H/869 A.D) was a well-known Sufi and scholar of Ḥadīth, who authored valuable books in both sciences. In Sufism, he authored “Al-Akyās wa-al-Mughtarrīn,” “Riḍādat al-Nafs,” and “al-Kashb.” And in Ḥadīth, he wrote his renowned book “Nwādir al-Uṣūl fi Maʾrifat Akhbār al-Rasūl”.\(^{58}\)

Also, Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d. 340 A.H/951 A.D) authored “Ṭabaqāt al-Nasāʾī,” and “Tārīkh al-Baṣrah” in the science of Ḥadīth and, in Sufism, he wrote “Manāqib al-Ṣūfīyyah”.\(^{59}\) In addition, al-Kalābādhi’s (d. 384 A.H/994 A.D) works in Sufism and Ḥadīth are very popular. In Ḥadīth, he wrote “al-ʿArbaʿīn fī al-Ḥadīth”; and, in Sufism, he authored “al-Tāʾarruf li-Madh-hab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf”. Besides, he was known for his attentive and unique memory, and al-Siyūṭī described him as having the most attentive memory in Transoxiana. Al-Ḥākim and al-Dāraquṭnī further praised him for his vast knowledge and attentive memory.\(^{60}\)

Based on the aforementioned, it can be said that Sufism-related topics (ethics and morality) were the preoccupation of many scholars of different branches of Islamic knowledge and this, again, indicates the importance of Sufism and its subject matter, namely ethics.

**Sufism and Tafsīr**

Mostly all Islamic schools of knowledge have contributed their share in the service of the Qurʾān through Tafsīr or Taʾwīl, and Sufism was not an exception.

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\(^{56}\) Abū Nuʿaym al-Asṭhānī, *Hilyat al-Awlyyāʾ*, for example pages 27; 35; 37; 103; 318.

\(^{57}\) Zarrūq, *Qvāʿid al-Taṣawwuf*, p. 40.


Sufis started interpreting the Qurʾān according to their religious experience and their general view of faith. As mentioned earlier, Sufis always liken religion to a seed composed of a kernel and a husk or shell, and their way in approaching the Qurʾān was not so far from this conviction as they believe that every verse of the Qurʾān features an outer meaning and inner meaning as well. This view is usually substantiated by a Prophetic hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) states that the Quran has an inner meaning, and that this inner meaning conceals a yet deeper inner meaning, and so on (up to seven successive levels of deeper meaning).61

The Sufi’s intrinsic goal in approaching the Qurʾān is to manifest the inner dimension of it without being oblivious to the Sharīʿah or the outer and apparent meaning of the text.62 Thus they were so concerned with discovering the hidden meanings of the Qurʾānic phrases as opposed to other scholars who directed their attention to the apparent meaning (al-Ẓāhir) of the verses. This inner method or esoteric interpretations of the Qurʾān does not usually contradict the conventional or exoteric interpretations; rather, it discusses the inner levels of meaning of the Quran.

With this in mind, Sufis usually affirm that their commentary of the Qurʾān is no more than “allusions” (ishārat) or “striking similitudes” (darb al-mithāl) that are bestowed to the perfectly devoted masters, and this does not necessarily mean averting the apparent meaning of the text because the exoteric meaning of the text is evident and well established and is not placed in contradiction with these allusions and illuminations. This is asserted by Ibn ʿAtāʾillāh al-Sakandarī in his book “Laṭāʾif al-Minan” and al-Siyūṭī in his book “al-Itqān”.63

To illustrate, the following are few examples of the Sufis who contributed to the commentary of the Qurʾān. It is noteworthy to mention here that most of the Sufi commentaries of the Qurʾān are still manuscripts and have not been published yet:

- Abū Muḥammad Sahl ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Tustarī (d. 273 or 283 A.H/886 or 896 A.D): He was one of the students of the Sufi master Maʿrūf al-Kharkhī. His book in Tafsīr entitled “Tafsīr al-Tustarī” and it was printed in Egypt in a middle-

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61 The hadith tells “No verse of the Qurʾān has been revealed which has not an external aspect and an inner aspect. Every letter has its definite sense (ḥadd) and every definition implies a place of ascent (mutla’).” This hadith is related by ibn Ḥibbān and ibn ʿAbd al-Barr and al-Ṭabarānī and ibn Ḥazm and many others, and reported by ibn Masʿūd.


sized volume under the name of “Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm” in 1908. This book includes al-Tustarī’s teachings and commentaries compiled by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balḍī. Al-Tustarī’s Tafsīr is held as the oldest completed Sufi commentary on the Qurʾān. The book does not include the commentary of all the Qurʾānic verses, but rather it deals with specific verses of the Qurʾān. Apparently these commentaries were Sahl’s answers to questions he was asked.


- Al-Sulamī (Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Hussayn) (d. 1021 A.H/1053 A.D): He was a prolific writer. There are more than 100 books are attributed to him, with about 30 of which are extant. His Tabaqāt al-Ṣīḥīyyah, the oldest extant Sufi hagiographical collection, and his two compilations of Sufi exegesis, “Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr” and “Ziyādāt Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr” are invaluable because they preserve the oral and written teachings of the Sufis of his time. In the introduction to his Tafsīr, al-Sulamī states that he included two types of quotations in his compilation: Āyāt (verses), in which he included the interpretations of specific verses; and Aqwāl (statements), in which he included the Sufi sayings related to key Qurʾānic terms.

- Al-Qushayrī (Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Ḥawāzin al-Naysabūrī) (d. 465 A.H/1053 A.D): He authored al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah which is considered by many as the classic formulation of the Sufi doctrine. As for the Qurʾān commentary, he wrote “Lātāʾif al-ʾIshārāt” which includes al-Qushayrī’s own commentaries of the Qurʾānic verses and the commentaries of other Sufis as well. He also wrote “al-Taysīr fi al-Tafsīr” and “al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr”.

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64 There are two editions of the book: One of them edited by Maḥmūd Jiratullah and it was published by Dār al-Qāfiyāh li-al-Nashr in 2002; and the other edition was edited by Muḥammad Basīl ʿYūn al-Sūd and was printed by Dār al-Kutub al-ʾIlmiyyah in Beirut, 2002.


Conclusion

Throughout this research paper, the position and the status of Islamic Sufism compared to other branches of *Sharīʿah* knowledge, namely *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic Traditions) and *Tafsīr* (Qur’ānic Exegesis) is established. Inter-relationships between the Sufi masters and scholars of *Fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* and *Qur’ānic* Exegesis have been put to investigation and selective, but connotative, examples of the Sufis’ involvement and contributions in these Islamic disciplines of knowledge have been provided.

Considering these inter-relationships and examples, the study concludes that Sufism has never been away from or alien to other disciplines of *Sharīʿah* knowledge, nor the scholars of other disciplines of were opposing to Sufism and Sufis. Both sides have been proven to show respect and to attend to one another, and in this way, the sciences of Islam arguably emerged interdependent, correlated and harmonized.